

a progressive Canadian newsmagazine

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BRIARPATCH

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Stop the Wars... For Kids' Sake!

More Flowers...
Less Bullets



Kabul ♣ Congo ♣ Libel Chill ♣ Adbuster's Shoe ♣ Occupations
Drug Ads ♣ Tranquilizers ♣ Organic Cuba ♣ Guatemala's Disappeared

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COVER

*Susan Siasang,
who escaped the impact
of war in Afghanistan*
photo: Debra Brin

OPENERS



ART RAFFLE

Tickets are still coming in for our very popular Art Raffle fundraiser, so we have extended the draw date until July 30 to make sure we don't miss anyone. If you still have your tickets, please send them in right away. This beautiful tea set for four, made and donated by Regina artist Ann McLellan, is one of the fantastic prizes to be won.

Solidarity WORKS!

Briarpatch was fortunate to have the help of Danielle Alfaro and Amy Juschka when they joined our staff for a couple of weeks as part of their Solidarity WORKS! activities. The program is organized by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour each summer to give young people an educational opportunity and work experience in unions and progressive organizations. While here, they did research, interviews and writing (see page 23) and learned how to make a magazine from scratch.

CHANGES

At the Briarpatch Annual General Meeting held in June, the Board of Directors and members adopted a motion to decrease the number of magazines produced each year. This move is being made for a number of reasons, the main one being that we lost money again this year. It is felt that more staff time needs

to be allotted to pursuing new subscribers, but we are not in a financial position to hire additional staff.

In order to improve our bottom line, the Board considered raising the subscription price but, although subscription prices haven't been raised since 1992, the Board was reluctant to do this, especially at a time when we are about to increase our efforts at selling new subscriptions. Many of our newer Briarpatch subscribers tend to have modest incomes (students for example), and we feel that our magazine should remain as accessible as possible for as many as possible. Briarpatch has its roots in the anti-poverty movement and our efforts continue in the struggle for equality for all.

By reducing the number of issues to eight per year, it is felt that the existing staff can then allocate more time to pursuing new subscriptions and to fundraising, thereby improving our revenues, and the additional production time will also result in improved quality of each issue.

This fall, because the editor will be taking classes in magazine production, you can expect magazines in October, November and December. By then the transition will be complete and we will be producing magazines each month except January, April, July and October - every third month.

Briarpatch is Saskatchewan's independent alternative newsmagazine committed to building a socialist democratic society. We provide a forum for disadvantaged peoples and support progressive movements working to change unjust structures and build a genuine political and economic democracy. We support peace, equality, democracy, social justice, Aboriginal self-determination, and the protection of the environment. We oppose the oppression of people on the basis of nation, class, race, gender, ability, and sexual orientation.

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Volume 33, Number 6

Kabul and Regina.....2
Saboor Siasang

**Making Life Real
at the Edge of the War.....3**
People in the Democratic Republic of Congo need international co-operation to help stop the resource extraction and related violence.
by Gianne Broughton

**SLAPP Happy Zoo
Masters.....8**
A Canadian zoo tries to use a libel suit to put the chill on criticism of their operation.
by John Sorenson

**Conservative Values
According to the
Bible.....12**
The religious right are pushing the boundaries of Bill C-250, the new and improved anti-hate legislation.

**If the Show Fits,
Order it Today.....13**
Adbusters has a new campaign to put the boots to Nike.
by Nichole Huck



*Congolese children are endangered by the activities of Canadian mines.
photo: Gianne Broughton*

Occupy - Resist - Produce.....15
Lost your job? Take over.
by Bianca Mugenyi and Yves Engler

Pharming.....19
The power of suggestion and repetition in drug ads.
by Women and Health Protection

Putting Women Down.....21
Canadian women are being tranquilized in huge numbers, and ending up addicted.
by the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health

Going Green in Cuba.....23
The Cuban experience shows many reasons why organic is best.
by Danielle Alfaro and Amy Juschka

Skeletons Speak Truth.....24
As the bodies of the disappeared Guatemalans are exhumed, their families finally get some answers after 20 years of wondering.
by Camilla Morrow

Culture and Reviews.....29
Books:
An Action a Day
A Human Being Died That Night
Dubya Speak.....31
Bushisms happen when his handlers aren't on guard.

My Opinion.....32
Chemical Soup
by Debra Brin

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Kabul and Regina

My old house, nestled within the mountains,
had a little portion of the daylight.
And our inaccurate clock was showing
the number of bullets fired every minute.
My daughter, who did not know the name of two flowers
seemed to recognize a number of weapons
by the sound they made around our house.
My wife used to repeat:
It's raining bullets again!
When could we put up a line for the clothes in our back-yard
and hang them along with our stress under the sun?

My new house in the "land of living skies"
loves to dawdle through long, long days, in the sun.
My daughters can draw and name a dozen flowers,
most of which are not even in my small English dictionary.
My wife and I sit under the sun and think
was it really us who lived that chaotic life?
Sheponds softly aloud,
I wish there could be a way to send some tranquility home,
And bring some mountains under the living skies!

- Saboor Siasang

You Said it!

SONGBIRDS SAY THANKS!

Dear Briarpatch,

Well, here we go again! That great federal government protector of human health and the environment, the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA), has de-registered a dangerous herbicide, mecoprop. That's the good news.

But guess what? PMRA is also concerned about the health of the pesticide industry - so concerned that mecoprop can be sold until December 31, 2005. Even worse, herbicide products containing mecoprop can be legally used until December 31, 2009. Do we really need any more proof that PMRA cares more about the pesticide industry than about human health and the environment?

Look at what mecoprop does. It inhibits the synthesis of DNA, interferes with blood clotting and inhibits the production of important components of the immune system. Laboratory tests on mice, using a mecoprop-containing herbicide, found that it interfered with reproduction, reducing litter size - even the lowest dose level tested had this effect. Also, a regional study in Canada has found that exposure to mecoprop is associated with an increased risk of the cancer non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Children are particularly at risk for a number of reasons, one being their fondness for playing on lawns.

Mecoprop is a very dangerous product. And it is found in 98 different registered herbicides used in Canada; Target, Killex, Dyvel, Greenleaf Weed Killer, Greencross Killex 500, Wilson RTU Spot Weed Killer, Weed Away, Co-op Premium Lawn Weed Killer and Trillium Liquid Herbicide, to name a few.

With a little more encouragement perhaps the City of Regina, and other communities, will voluntarily stop using these toxins now, rather than continue to poison our environment while "phasing them out" for years to come. We can look at Halifax, a city with a by-law restricting pesticide use, to see the benefits; people with chemical sensitivities have noticed an improvement in their health, lawns are being replaced with perennials and shrubs that are much more interesting and require less maintenance and water, and songbird populations are increasing.

So why wait until December 31, 2009 putting human health and the environment at risk for another 5 years. Just because the regulator, PMRA would rather risk human and environmental health than offend the pesticide industry? With friends like PMRA, we really don't need any more enemies!

Allan S. Taylor
Regina, SK

Making Life Real at the Edge of the War

While mining companies, including some from Canada, continue to perpetuate the violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo, another force rises to counter the effects... people power.

story and photos by Gianne Broughton

Children joyfully singing songs of friendship and reciting poems of peace; people walking miles from their homes to the city centre to work, or in search of work, but stopping often to greet friends; the dented shell of a car being wheeled on a hand cart to the first stop on its journey to be rebuilt into a working automobile; squash and spinach growing on the verge of a main street; roadside stands lighted late into the night by lamps recycled from discarded tin cans...

These are some of the marvels that impressed me during the ten days in mid April when I visited Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo in my role as international program coordinator for Canadian Friends Service Committee (CFSC), the outreach arm of the Quakers in Canada. While I was there, I attended a gathering of the Congolese church leaders who are responsible for peace and justice programming in their churches. They made some exciting plans to work together to strengthen the possibility that the current peace process will actually result in a final end to the natural-resource-based civil war.

Serving others is an integral part of the Quaker approach to spiritual life. Monthly Meetings (congregations) in every part of the world organize activities that promote peace and alleviate -suffering in their communities. Kinshasa Monthly Meeting has three



*Children drawing pictures of peace,
Kinshasa Meeting House, April 2004.*

inter-related service projects: Action pour la Jeune Fille (Action for Young Girls); Project Muinda pour la Paix (Light of Life Project for Peace); and Femmes pour la Paix (Women for Peace).

Action pour la Jeune Fille takes place in a classroom attached to a modest house in one of the poorest areas of Kinshasa, Commune de Bumbu. To get there from the centre of Kinshasa, you follow one of the main arterial avenues, a smooth ride for about ten minutes, and then the paving ends. Soon the driver is dodging potholes that have become troughs, and informal markets and pedestrians are crowding the street. Since the early 1960s when the regime of the dictator Mobutu began, there has been no investment in public infrastructure, and the cement-block houses congest the side streets. Community life takes place on the avenue: soccer games, garbage dumps, phone card booths, currency changers, tailors with their sewing machines, huge piles of dirt that may someday be used to fix the road - all can be seen on the avenue. Since education is paid for by parents, and very few parents have employment, children and young people spend most of their time on the avenue.

Careers and Conflict Resolution

But in the Action Jeune Filles classroom, where the human noise of the avenue can be heard like the ebb and flow of the ocean throughout the day and night, 30 young women are listening, writing, calculating and sewing. They are hoping that these skills will give them an alternative to the sex trade. And there is some grounds for their hope, because, on the veranda of the classroom, last year's graduates are sewing beautiful handbags and backpacks, and being paid a salary that makes the effort worth while.

In the house attached to the classroom lives the Bakamana Mouana family, founding members of Kinshasa Monthly Meeting. David and Marie Luse depart each morning for the project office in the city centre. There Marie Luse oversees another group of sewers, and runs the shop where the products are sold, while David Bakamana coordinates a group of four young professionals who are the staff of Project Muinda.

They work essentially as volunteers (they get a small wage shared from the profits of the sewing business)

because they value the skills they learn and the hope that the work gives them. Bakamana, himself a graduate of the Peacebuilding Program of Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia and of Responding to Conflict, the WoodBrooke Quaker institute in Birmingham, England, has effectively shared his knowledge. They have become skilled community facilitators, training and supporting neighbourhood groups called Cellules de Paix (Peace



In the Action Jeune Filles classroom, 30 young women are listening, writing, calculating and sewing. They are hoping that these skills will give them an alternative to the sex trade.

Cells). Because of their work, each of the 24 communes of Kinshasa now has a group of people trained to mediate and resolve conflicts. Although Kinshasa is more than 1000 kilometers from the part of the country where bullets occasionally still fly, people from all ethnic backgrounds and parts of the country live in the Kinshasa communes, and tensions can run high. This is conflict

prevention work at its most fundamental, inter-personal level.

The Project Muinda office also serves as a headquarters for Femmes pour la Paix. This is a group of educated women who want to share their skills with other women. They conduct workshops with women's groups on topics such as women's legal rights in contrast to exploitative conventional practices; appropriate techniques for preserving food and sanitizing surroundings; and conflict resolution. Their work also has a multiplying effect, because workshop participants learn how to teach others.

Election Preparation

Project Muinda staff are also analyzing their country's situation on the national and international levels, and they have begun a public education project to prepare people for the elections expected in late 2005. Just think - a large portion of Congolese are between the ages of 18 and 40, and they have never had the opportunity to participate in an election. The project is conducting discussion groups throughout the city, and training others to conduct such discussions, to help people think through the issues of democracy. How can they judge if they are being treated fairly at the polling stations?

What criteria can they use in judging between candidates? Where can they get reliable information about the candidates? The elections will include four levels of administration: municipal, provincial, national representatives, and presidential. Currently, the process of declaring candidature and forming political parties is quite chaotic. What accountability should citizens expect from the political organizations that present them with electoral choices? It is marvelous to watch the skill of Muinda facilitators, many of whom have not had a chance to go to school, as they help people grapple with these issues.

As admirable as these accomplishments are, the Kinshasa Quakers know that they can't substantially influence their country's future alone. But all the churches gathered together, and working with the international community, do have a hope of nudging the system towards a sustainable peace.

Resources and Conflict

The conflict in the Congo is a complex system. It is a huge country, stretching from Lake Tanganyika in East Africa to the mouth of the Congo River on the Atlantic coast. The eastern provinces are rich in natural resources: forests, gorillas, gold, coltan (the gold of the electronics industry), diamonds, cobalt and other minerals. These provinces border on a number of countries: Central African Republic, Sudan, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania and Angola. Of these, only Tanzania is not involved in or threatened by civil war or major human rights violations. Also, since the arrival of Europeans, there has never been a firmly established trade system that ensured that the economic benefits of the natural resources were invested in building the people's quality of life.

The last 10 years have seen an intensification of the violent struggle for control of these resources. When the current leader of Rwanda, Kagame, invaded that country 10 years ago, and the genocide occurred, many supporters

of the previous regime joined the refugees who fled into neighbouring Congo. There they formed an armed force called Interahamwe. Kagame invaded, ostensibly to curb Interahamwe, but he also allied himself with Laurent

Kabila, a Congolese leader who wished to overthrow the odious Mobutu regime. Assisted as well by forces from Uganda, Kabila raised a Congolese force and drove westward all the way to Kinshasa, where Mobutu was overthrown. Once secure, Kabila refused to grant the Rwandan and Ugandan regimes access to the Congolese natural resources, and a new phase of conflict formed when Rwandan and Ugandan forces captured different territories where they could divert the production of various mines. By and large, the local Congolese, having achieved the overthrow of Mobutu, no longer supported the military action, and armed groups, whether foreign or local, began kidnapping primarily young people to form the lowest ranks of their forces. Kabila responded by allying with Zimbabwe and paying off the Zimbabwean forces by granting them forestry

concessions, ignoring the interests of people and animals who depend upon that ecosystem.

Peace Attempts

There has been a series of attempted peace accords, always ruptured before an election could be properly organized. There is hope that this one will last, partly because international attention has finally been focused on the economic agendas of the conflict. The UN Security Council has appointed several Expert Panels to report on the role of natural resource extraction. The report of the third Panel identified 157 companies that played, and continue to play, some role. They recommended that a fourth Panel be mandated with investigating and bringing charges, where evidence indicated, against those who acted in ways that prolonged the violence. The fourth



The young women model the clothing and handbags they have created.

Panel did not bring any public charges and, although the international community is now more aware, the Congolese are not confident that the abuses really will end. As they feared, factions within the new "integrated" national army have recently taken to pursuing their goals by violence again, terrorizing the city of Bukavu (which borders Rwanda), and causing a massive exodus to Uvira (which borders Burundi), some 100 kilometers away.

Building Confidence and Hope

The Churches have committed themselves to informing their members about how they can participate in the elections and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. This goes beyond simply instructing them in how these things function, but also in ways that citizens can insist on fairness and accountability.

In Eastern Congo, the churches have joined together to do human rights monitoring work. I spoke to one worker, Pascal, who often visits the mines and reports on conditions. More than once he has had to flee his home to escape armed frighteners. The courage required to continue this work commands respect. There is also a remarkable strength in the peace workers in Kinshasa who maintain

their motivation to work non-violently and tirelessly to bolster the practical possibilities for peace.

Our Role

How can Canadians respond to such commitment? We must insist that corporations act responsibly in every part of the globe. The eight Canadian corporations who were listed in the Expert Panel's report have assured the Canadian government that they have not promoted violence or human or labour rights abuses, but no facts have been made public. Of the other 149 companies, many must also have operations in Canada. They should cooperate in public inquiries to clear their names, and they should contribute to the work of rebuilding and stabilizing the Congo. And, as citizens, investors and consumers, we should be willing to share in the costs and the work of ensuring democratic and corporate accountability.

International Pressure

In 2001, in response to the public campaign linking diamonds to war, the diamond industry began to co-operate with non-governmental watch dog organizations and governments to regulate trade and discourage illegal



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trafficking to finance violence. This was an important factor in the reduction of war in the West African countries of Sierra Leone and Liberia. As the UN Expert Panel on Congo recommended, similar international co-operation is required for all natural resources.

A number of organizations have been making progress on this theme. Publish What You Pay (PWYP), a British-based international coalition of more than 220 NGOs (and growing) is appealing for full transparency of oil, gas and mining companies' payments to all national governments. This information can then be used by NGOs in the host countries (many of whom are members of PWYP) to hold their governments to account. Their advocacy stimulated Tony Blair to propose the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), which is gradually being accepted by governments in the North and in the South. But EITI is only a partial measure: it is based on voluntary disclosure by governments of aggregate figures, so it is little help in tracing the behaviour of individual companies. You can follow the work of Publish What You Pay on their website; www.publishwhatyoupay.org.

Here in Canada, the Halifax Initiative is watching the World Bank very carefully. A ground-breaking review of the Bank's investments in extractive industries was recently released. The 140 recommendations, if

implemented, would go a long way to ensuring that local communities benefit from the wealth generated by their natural resources. But the Bank's management board's response is expected to ignore most of the recommendations. When it is released in mid-July, we will have a good opportunity to question the Bank's commitment to alleviating poverty and promoting human rights. Readers can keep abreast of this on the website at: www.halifaxinitiative.org.

Partnership Africa Canada, who played a major role in the success of the Kimberly Process to regulate the diamond industry, continues to monitor the situation of diamonds and war in Sierra Leone, Angola, and Congo, and releases quarterly reports on their website at: www.partnershipafricacanada.org. Francophone NGOs in Canada have also been leaders in this work, including the GRAMA research group at University of Quebec in Montreal, and Entraide Missionnaire, also in Montreal. Mining Watch is also active.

In the coming weeks, CFSC will be considering how we can strengthen the growing international pressure for accountability. Like the Quakers in Kinshasa, we know that our best hope is working together with others.

Gianne Broughton is the International Program Coordinator for the Canadian Friends Service Committee.

SLAPP Happy Zoo Masters

Marineland is trying to silence critics with a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation (SLAPP).

by John Sorenson

Do you care about freedom of speech? Are you disturbed by animal suffering? If you answered "yes" to either question, recent events in Niagara Falls should be of concern to you.

Marineland, the "theme park" that displays captive marine mammals in Niagara Falls, is attempting to silence criticism of their operations by suing Niagara Action For Animals (NAFA), a small, non-profit, grass-roots animal protection group. On July 27, 2003 Marineland's high-priced legal team slammed NAFA with notice of a libel suit claiming \$250,000 in punitive damages and seeking an injunction that would stop NAFA from publishing any statements against Marineland.

The case is based on a letter sent by NAFA to a Niagara Falls car dealership, Autoland Chrysler, politely requesting a meeting so that NAFA could explain their case against the dealership's plan to stage a Christmas party at Marineland. NAFA's position is that no libel was committed since the statements made about conditions at the amusement park are true and Marineland suffered no economic loss since Autoland went ahead with its party.

SLAPPs

NAFA sees Marineland's legal action as an attempt to use the courts to limit freedom of speech. In the *St. Catharines Standard* and the *Niagara Falls Review* (May 27, 2003), John Law of the Osprey News Network quotes NAFA spokesperson Dan Wilson: "We all believe in standing up and speaking out for the animals.

NAFA has done just that and now a big corporation is trying to silence us through bankruptcy." This is a tactic that has been widely used by large corporate polluters against environmentalist groups. These tactics have become so prevalent that two professors at the University of Colorado, George Pring and Penelope Canan have coined a term for them: Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP). They suggest that SLAPPs are not usually intended to reach the courts (where they typically lose) but are designed to silence criticism through legal intimidation. The goal is to limit public debate and to allow corporations to continue their activities without restriction. In his book *Green Backlash*, Andrew Rowell notes that corporations have launched thousands of SLAPPs, targeting people for attending meetings, signing petitions, reporting violations of pollution laws, writing letters to local newspapers, testifying in public hearings or supporting boycotts. These tactics obviously pose a serious danger to democratic freedoms that we all value, such as the right to express our opinions and to speak out against injustices.

SLAPPs have come to Canada, too. For example, in 1990 Ogden Martin company threatened to sue for defamation 52 doctors who expressed concern over the impact of a waste incinerator in Orillia; the Ontario Medical Association passed a resolution defending the doctors for speaking out on behalf of public health and Ogden Martin did not proceed with the charges.

Since the majority of SLAPPs are clearly frivolous and obviously designed to intimidate critics rather than



The bears, normally solitary in their natural environment and sensitive to auditory stimulation, are crowded together directly opposite what Marineland touts as the world's largest steel roller-coaster.

photo: Dan Wilson

to address any real legal issues, activists and their lawyers have started to strike back and the courts seem to be supporting them. In 1991, one activist in Missouri was awarded an \$86.5 million judgment against an incinerator company that had wrongfully launched a SLAPP against her. Shell Oil had to pay out \$5.2 million for wrongfully suing Raymond Leonardini who had questioned the carcinogenic property of plastic pipes used by the corporation.

McSLAPP

The most famous case is the McLibel Trial in which McDonald's fast food corporation sued a postal worker and a gardener in London (Helen Steel and Dave Morris). The two and a half year case became the longest trial in England. In 1997, the judge ruled that McDonald's "exploit children" with "misleading" advertising, are "culpably responsible" for cruelty to animals, are "antipathetic" to unionization and pay their workers low wages. Although the judge ruled that the two activists had not proved all their points and should pay damages, they refused to do so and, reeling from the negative publicity, McDonald's did not pursue it.

In 1999 the Court of Appeal made further rulings against McDonald's concerning heart disease and employment. Due to the publicity surrounding the court case, the Anti-McDonald's campaign became an international movement, resulting in books and a documentary film. Steel and Morris continued their campaign and have taken the British Government to the European Court of Human Rights to defend the public's right to criticize multinationals, claiming British libel laws are unfair.

Those who make valid criticisms of powerful corporations should not have to fear retaliation in court. This is one reason why Marineland's efforts to silence NAFA should be of concern to all Canadians, even those who are not distressed about mistreatment of animals.

NAFA Speaks Truth

Of course, the question arises: do the claims made by NAFA have validity? In general, the practices of capturing and displaying marine mammals have been extensively criticized. Dolphins and whales are intelligent, sensitive animals that live within complex societies. Methods of capture are often violent and many



Marineland is attempting to silence criticism of their operations by suing Niagara Action For Animals, a small grass-roots animal protection group.

animals are accidentally killed in the process or die in transport. Removing individuals from their families and social groups is stressful for the captured individuals as well as for those who manage to escape. Captivity has a radical effect on these animals. In their natural environment they dive deeply and travel vast distances. No tank in an amusement park can duplicate these conditions. As well, these animals navigate their natural world through echolocation, the use of soundwaves. In a small tank, this would be maddening. Writing for the Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society in Britain, Vanessa Williams compares this to what a human being would experience if confined to a lifetime in a hall of mirrors. Removed from their rich ecosystem and complex social world, captive dolphins and whales are imprisoned in a minuscule alien environment, bombarded with strange sounds, fed an artificial diet, forced to perform unnatural activities and subjected to the stressful proximity of hordes of tourists. Most live

drastically shortened lives. It is impossible to imagine anything remotely attractive or entertaining in all of this.

In particular, Marineland has been widely criticized by international animal protection groups. Established in the 1960s, Marineland seems like a relic from a more distant past, with its sad displays of imprisoned animals. Safety and health conditions have been widely criticized and many simply don't survive their captivity. As NAFA stated in their letter to Autoland Chrysler, 23 dolphins and 10 orcas have died at Marineland. Zoocheck Canada's comprehensive 1998 report "Distorted Nature: Exposing the Myth of Marineland," based on investigations carried out by 13 scientific experts in a variety of disciplines such as aquarium animal husbandry, biology, conservation, ethology, marine mammal science, veterinary science, wildlife rehabilitation and zoology outlines many of the problems with

Marineland. The report expressed grave concerns about the welfare of animals held at Marineland, substandard public health and safety measures, the negative

educational role played by the amusement park and the absence of any valid conservation activities.

Zoocheck and other groups such as the International Fund for Animal Welfare have also criticized Marineland's importation of Russian beluga whales and bottlenose dolphins, after the Canadian government prohibited them from capturing these animals in Canadian waters. Commenting on this in the *Whales Alive* newsletter in 2000, William Rossiter, President of the Cetacean Society International noted that "many people in the Canadian zoo/aquarium industry and government feel Marineland is an

embarrassment." Speaking in the House of Commons on April 2, 2001, MP Libby Davis stated that Canada's lack of policy and regulation on capturing marine mammals had allowed unscrupulous operators to bypass stricter



The only message that children will derive from a visit to Marineland is that it is ethically acceptable to imprison animals and force them to do pathetic tricks.

photo: Dan Wilson

regulations in their own countries and that there was "no question" that Marineland had played a role in this, helping to undermine international protection.

Wrong Lessons

Many parents and schools send children to Marineland believing they will learn something about animals and develop an appreciation for nature. These are laudable goals but it seems unlikely they will be met at Marineland. For example, Dr. Naomi A. Rose, marine mammal scientist and coordinator of all marine mammal programs for the Humane Society of the United States describes the dolphin show as "almost devoid of biological information" and notes that the performance "would not meet the minimum professional educational standards required under the (American) Marine Mammal Protection Act." Dr. Rose also found that enclosures for animals did not meet minimum standards for size and noted rust and chipping paint that affected water quality.

Similarly, Dr. John Gripper, a veterinarian with over 30 years of international experience, an appointed zoo inspector in Britain, and Advisory Director of the World Society for the Protection of Animals also found the animal enclosures too small and advised that Marineland "would fail an inspection under the standards of the British Zoo Licensing Act." Other scientists who contributed to the Zoocheck report came to similar conclusions. Clearly, then, the only message that children will derive from a visit to Marineland is that it is ethically acceptable to imprison animals in unacceptable conditions and force them to do pathetic tricks for our entertainment.

Animal Needs

Marine mammals are not the only animals imprisoned at Marineland. In a 2002 report for the World Society for the Protection of Animals and Zoocheck, Rob Laidlaw described how bears and deer are confined in wholly artificial, featureless environments that provide no stimulation, privacy or shelter and do not allow the animals to exercise their full range of natural behaviour and movement. The bears, normally solitary in their natural environment and sensitive to auditory stimulation, are crowded together directly opposite what Marineland touts as the world's largest steel roller-coaster.

Clearly, the case raises important ethical and political questions. Those who are concerned about



These animals navigate their natural world through echolocation, the use of soundwaves. In a small tank, this would be maddening.

freedom of speech and civil liberties in general and those who care about animals will be watching the case closely. Public sympathy is more likely to be with a small group of volunteers who care deeply about animal welfare than with a large corporation that looks like it's trying to crush those same volunteers when they speak out against what they see as cruelty and injustice.

Certainly, the controversy will raise public awareness of what actually happens inside Marineland and, if the case does proceed to court, a great deal of previously unattainable information will be exposed about Marineland's operations, such as the number and causes of animal deaths and details about conditions inside the park. In attempting to silence its critics, Marineland may be opening doors on secrets it has tried to hide for years.

John Sorenson is a professor in the Department of Sociology at Brock University in St. Catharines, where he teaches courses on the role of animals in human societies.



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Conservative Values According to the Bible



Just before the federal election, campaign literature from the Conservative party that smacked of defiance to Bill C-250 (the recently passed anti-hate legislation) surfaced in Regina. The glossy full colour pamphlet portrayed an assortment of old men who supposedly represented entire faith communities with their malicious views. They had even recruited a TV evangelist to (*ahem*) improve their credibility! They were basing their opinions on quotes from the Bible, just like Dr. Laura Schlessinger does on her radio advice program. In response to her fanatical views, a listener penned this open letter which has been circulating on the internet:

Dear Dr. Laura,

Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's Law. I have learned a great deal from your show, and try to share that knowledge with as many people as I can. When someone tries to defend the homosexuality, for example, I simply remind them that Leviticus 18:22 clearly states it to be an abomination. End of debate.

I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some of the other specific laws and how to follow them.

When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odor for the Lord (Leviticus 1:9). The problem is my neighbors. They claim the odour is not pleasing to them. Should I smite them?

I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21:7. In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her?

I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of menstrual uncleanness (Leviticus 15:19-24). The problem is how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense.

Leviticus 25:44 states that I may indeed possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighbouring nations. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify? Why can't I own Canadians?

I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35:2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself?

A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination (Leviticus 11:10), it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle this?

Leviticus 21:20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight. I have to admit that I wear reading glasses. Does my vision have to be 20/20, or is there some wiggle room here?

Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Leviticus 19:27. How should they die?

I know from Leviticus 11:6-8 that touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean, but may I still play football if I wear gloves?

My uncle has a farm. He violates Leviticus 19:19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread (cotton/polyester blend). He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them? (Leviticus 24:10-16). Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair like we do with people who sleep with their in-laws? (Leviticus 20:14)

I know you have studied these things extensively, so I am confident you can help. Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging.

**Your devoted disciple and adoring fan,
Clarity Seeker**

If the Shoe Fits, Order it Today

Can radical anti-advertizing group Adbusters find ways to go toe-to-toe against their mega-corp competition in the promotion of a new shoe designed to kick Nike's ass?

by Nichole Huck

"Phil Knight had a dream. He'd sell shoes. He'd sell dreams. He'd get rich. He'd use sweatshops if he had to. Then along came a new shoe. Plain. Simple. Fair. Designed for only one thing: kicking Phil's Ass."

This controversial text will soon be plastered on billboards and in newspapers across North America. The ads are for a new shoe and feature a picture of a black sneaker with a white, hand-drawn scribble on the side and a red dot on the front (for kicking Phil Knight's ass). They urge the reader to "rethink the cool."

The shoe, known as the "unswisher" or the "black spot sneaker" is the brainchild of "culture jamming" Adbusters media foundation. Adbusters is committed to launching a revolution of the mental environment and combating consumer culture. Since its conception in 1989, Adbusters has established a magazine with a circulation of 125,000 worldwide and operates a popular website. The foundation is also responsible

for international campaigns such as Buy Nothing Day and TV Turnoff Week.

It is also the driving force behind many ongoing social campaigns including Unbrand America, Reclaim Urban Space, Media Carta, and Commercial Free Schools. There is almost nothing Adbusters considers taboo or too risqué. "We have this feeling of bravado that we are one of the few magazines that is fearless," says Lasn. In fact, the last issue of the magazine attacked the political left. "We felt betrayed. I'm trying to jump over the dead body of the political left and start forging a new kind of politics," says Kalle Lasn, founder of Adbusters.

But Adbusters latest and perhaps most aggressive venture has been the creation of the black spot sneaker. "We got tired of complaining and whining about the fact that after 10 years of talking back to Nike it was still cool and still worn by every sixth teenager in high



Conversely

What's the story behind the design choice for the first shoe? It's all about another Nike evil deed. The Converse sneaker has been around since the 1920s, popular with basketball players, musicians, rebels, anti-globalization activists, and anyone shopping for the un-Nike shoe. Converse have always been a cool shoe - a classic black and white, go with everything in your wardrobe kind of shoe. But they didn't have the huge clone-factor popularity that only millions of dollars worth of ads can induce in unsuspecting minds. Hard times hit in 2001 and Converse moved production from the USA to Asia. That move only bought them a little time; Nike bought the Converse brand last July. So it seems rather fitting that if a shoe is going to rise from the ashes and do damage to Nike's brand, it should be this particular sneaker.

school. We decided that instead of complaining about the Nike logo we were going to launch our own anti-logo. We were going to steal some of that cool that Nike built up with the hundreds of billions of dollars it spent putting this nuclear glow around their swoosh, and we were going to put it around our own logo. We

"I think change begins one day in your own life when something happens to you that really hits you in the gut as being wrong. It could be a speech that President Bush gave last night or it could be an ad you saw on children's television on Saturday morning."

were gonna out-cool the bastard," explains Lasn.

"If we can do some real damage in the sneaker industry by cutting into Nike's share and build our own brand, then we can start doing some larger things like creating a more grassroots type of capitalism. Instead of complaining about the market place, let's create a different kind of market place where the price of every product tells the ecological and social truth," explains Lasn.

The Adbusters media foundation was founded 14 years ago by a group of environmentalists from BC who were disgusted with a \$6 million TV campaign launched by the forest industry to tell the public what a great job they were doing managing the forests. The group of environmentalists came up with their own 30-second TV spot designed to tell the other side of the story, but they were not allowed to buy airtime on any TV stations. The magazine was created because "we just wanted to vent our anger, we were pissed off. Here was this industry that was devastating British Columbia and we weren't able to speak back on television which is obviously the most powerful social communication medium of our time," explained Lasn.

Lasn describes the magazine as a journal of the mental environment. "We are trying to get people to think about the mental environment in roughly the same terms as we think about the physical environment. We are trying to launch a mental environment movement which also reinvents every nook and cranny of the way we think about the media, broadcasting, media democracy, access to airwaves, and media concentration."

"I think change begins one day in your own life when something happens to you that really hits you in

the gut as being wrong. It could be a speech that President Bush gave last night or it could be an ad you saw on children's television on Saturday morning." Lasn is critical of those in the political left who "just mouth slogans and hold up placards at a protest" and he blames our consumer culture for creating a society full of "bogus types."

"Anyone who grows up in this consumer culture of ours, from the moment they are a little baby crawling around the TV set to the time they become teenagers, their brains have already absorbed 350,000 television commercials. They have already been swimming around in this electronic environment of ours. I think those people have already been mindfucked."

Lasn blames corporations like Nike and its CEO Phil Knight for creating what he calls a corporate pseudo kind of cool. "Teenagers are mindfucked into thinking they can get some kind of empowerment out of that and it makes them more mentally sick because it doesn't work."

"If you are wearing a black spot sneaker, you might be wearing real empowerment," says Lasn. Adbusters is considering giving a symbolic share of the "unswoosh" stock to everyone who buys a pair of sneakers. There would be internet votes to determine where the profits would be spent and what the next shoe design would look like. Because Adbusters is a non-profit group, any money they make is poured into the foundation's social marketing work. "If we suddenly made \$10 million next year we would have no problem in putting it into Buy Nothing Day and buying more air time on CNN, and having one page in the Globe and Mail every week to complain about what CANWEST is doing."

The blackspot sneaker will sell in the \$40 range and will be made of hemp. Over 6000 people have pre-ordered the shoe on the website, but the shoe will not be available through the website or in stores until September. *(Editor's note: As we go to press, Adbusters is now looking for a manufacturer in Poland, Spain or Portugal as the Asian factories visited did not meet the required working conditions. The good news is that they feel confident that they will be filling orders by September and will now be able to use hemp and other Earth-friendly materials.)*

Nichole Huck is a journalism student at the University of Regina. To follow the progress of this un-corporate shoe making adventure, check the website at www.blackspotsneaker.org. For information about other Adbuster projects, go to www.adbusters.org.

Occupy - Resist - Produce

*When corporations cut and run,
workers are staking a claim.*

by Yves Engler and Bianca Mugenyi

In their new documentary, *The Take*, Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein go in search of alternatives to some of the problems of globalized capitalism. First stop Argentina. Not too long ago this was a rich, industrial country. Star pupil of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 90s, it was hailed as the “free-market miracle.”

The Take presents a very different Argentina. A place where people are locked out of their bank accounts, where 30 percent face unemployment and half the population live below the poverty line. There is a clear warning in this film; we may be headed in the same direction.

Lewis and Klein cleverly contrast the diminished lives of Argentina’s jobless and disillusioned with the ostentatious and glittering lifestyles of Argentina’s politicians, most notably Carlos Menem, currently on the run from corruption charges. President throughout the 1990s, Menem, in partnership with the IMF, sold the country’s soul. They deregulated,

cut social spending, pegged the peso to the dollar and sold off most national industries. In short, Argentina’s elite neoliberalized their way to total economic and social disaster.

Workers Step In

Despite an unfortunate backdrop, the stories told in the film are of hope and reclamation of power and

dignity amidst chaos. *The Take* focuses on workers who opt to take over their closing factories, reclaiming their livelihood. “Occupy, Resist, Produce” is the common slogan under which factories are reclaimed and run, often with very high levels of productivity.

Apocalyptic

silence at a locked factory gate marks the film’s beginning. Taken beyond the closed gates, we are invited to peer into the lives and battles of workers at several factories, some occupied, others still fighting to regain their livelihoods. Too soon it becomes clear that for workplace occupations to succeed in reclaiming closed



*“Okay, the final step says to dismantle the whole thing
and ship the jobs overseas.”*

businesses under worker control there are numerous obstacles, notably capitalist glorification of private property. The workers, however, counter private property arguments by highlighting the back-wages they are owed and the millions in subsidies these "private" enterprises have received in public moneys. They argue that they are now creditors and want their workplaces as payback. Even without these arguments, we can't help but wonder whether "owners" really have the right to simply close shop without consulting those who work there.

Persistence Prevails

The Take offers a very personal look at the hardships of unemployment on workers and their families after the closure of the Forja plant - the factory followed most consistently throughout the film. After organizing themselves, the Forja workers undergo intense legal and political battles to restart their factory. In an emotional victory, the workers win a law of expropriation from the Provincial legislature and are able to re-open their plant under worker control.

The story of the Brukman garment factory, one of the more highly recognized occupied factories, is also followed. The state shuts Brukman down with force but is ultimately defeated in the face of popular pressure. The show of support and solidarity amongst this predominantly female workforce is extremely moving. After winning a law of expropriation, Brukman is reported to be back up and running.

Zanon ceramics, another reclaimed factory, has been running for two years on the basis of one worker one vote and identical salaries for all. As one of the first occupied factories, the Zanon reclamation has been cause for popular celebration and an inspiration to workers. Because of an increase in production, Zanon has recently hired 30 more workers.

Lessons Learned

Unlike so many documentaries, *The Take* ends on an uplifting note - but this is more than just a feel good movie about Argentina. It is part of a larger political project that can teach us something about the means of attaining local alternatives to global corporate capitalism. Local alternatives could contain the seeds of a more democratic system.

To bring this project home we looked into a handful of companies in Canada that recently shut down. Like in Argentina, most (if not all) companies that close shop here have received lots of public money (regardless of efficiency and profitability), and regularly have significant

ecological debts to communities. Following a brief investigation, we found the following three examples:

In January 2004, the world's largest producer of aluminum, Alcan, announced (10 years earlier than expected) that it was shutting down the Jonquière Soderburg smelter in Arvida, Québec. Alcan has received federal assistance with an estimated worth of over a hundred million dollars and has made over two thirds of a billion dollars (Canadian) in profit over the last two years. Despite all this, Alcan maintains a tax deferral of over a billion dollars as well as a huge uncompensated environmental debt.

After running successfully for 40 years, chemical giant DuPont Co. announced on April 12th that it would close down its spandex fibre operation in Ontario this May, cutting 200 jobs in the process. Despite global profits of 18 billion (USA) since 1998, with over \$1.5 billion (Canadian) generated in Canada between 1997 and 2002, DuPont Co. has decided to cut costs through a reduction of its workforce. (Majority shares of DuPont Canada were owned by its parent company Dupont Co. until 2003 when DuPont Co. acquired 100 percent of DuPont Canada shares.) These cuts are seen as necessary despite the fact that over the past four years Canadian governments have provided more than 40 million dollars in funding for research and development projects involving DuPont through the Networks of Centres of Excellence, Technology Partnerships Canada, the Ontario Research Development Challenge Fund and the Centre for Automotive Materials and Manufacturing.

Celestica, a leading contract electronics manufacturing company announced in April that their Kirkland operations near Montreal would close in the next four to six months. Seven hundred workers have so far lost their jobs with more cuts to be announced. Celestica, however, continues to expand its global operations with a shift to production in Asia and South America. In the past two years Celestica has seen an adjusted profit of \$47 million and strong revenue growth. Additionally, Celestica has recently received millions of dollars in Canadian research and development funding with the help of The Natural Sciences and Engineering Council of Canada, Youth Employment Strategy and the Ontario Research Development Challenge Fund. Additionally, as an IBM spin-off, Celestica has benefited from its predecessor's long history of government funding.

Do Dupont, Celestica and Alcan workers have the right to Occupy, Resist, Produce at their closed factories and, more important, would the community

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and politicians consider the aforementioned information on these companies profits and public subsidies sufficient to support the workers in their subversion of private property?

A CAW Occupation

Taking a page from the Occupy, Resist, Produce mantra of Argentina's factory occupation movement, the 550 affected Alcan employees (Canadian Auto Workers members), decided to seize, occupy and run the plant themselves. Days after the occupation began at the end of January, over 5,000 marched in Arvida, Quebec in support of the workers. During the occupation, workers continued to produce aluminum at increased output. During this time, Alcan withheld raw materials, making a long-term occupation, without more generalized actions, impractical. The occupation ended on February 17th after Alcan agreed to some concessions and a labour-board injunction was obtained ordering workers to dismantle their operation.

Unlike the Argentinean factory takeovers depicted in *The Take*, the Alcan occupation didn't seriously threaten capitalist property relations. It did, however, demonstrate that Canadian workers and their communities, privileged in comparison to the working classes in most countries, are ready to actively reject

private control over their livelihood. If workers feel a closing corporation is especially dishonest and its contradictions are flagrant (accepting public subsidies yet profitable, for example), many are willing to take aggressive action. Workplace takeovers are not just a means for working people to regain their livelihood; the occupation - a relatively simple concept - is a serious rejection of private property relations which, especially under democratic worker control, significantly advances economic democracy.

Hopefully *The Take* will be shown in communities across Canada in the coming months. More exciting though would be the spreading of the Occupy, Resist, Produce mantra to closed workplaces in those same communities. That would be a movement worth supporting.

Yves Engler is a Montreal area activist and writer who recently completed his first book.

Bianca Mugenyi is a Montreal area activist and writer. She invites readers to e-mail her at kabibi@riseup.net with any creative ideas on avenues towards the legalizing of factory takeovers. With the aim of advancing the project, all ideas would be welcomed. To find information about The Take check the website at: www.thetake.org.

Direct-to-Consumer Advertising of Prescription Drugs

Advertising by its very nature is designed to "sell" a product, and adverts therefore need to talk up the benefits and play down the risks.

British Medical Journal
17/06/05

investigators from the General Accounting Office said some drug companies had repeatedly included misleading information in their advertisements despite warnings from regulators.

New York Times
12/14/02

In a 10 year analysis of advertising in US magazines, 91% of advertisements omitted information about the likelihood of treatment success and 71% failed to mention any other possible treatments.

BMJ 19/04/02

In 2000 alone, Merck spent \$160.8 million to push their arthritis drug, Vioxx. That's more advertising dollars for one drug than PepsiCo spends each year to promote Pepsi.

Alternatives 09/02

In 2001, the top drug companies generated \$17 in sales from each dollar spent on marketing.

NYT 12/12/02

Prescription for Profit

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Women and Health Protection

www.whp-apsf.ca

1-888-818-9372

Pharming

*They're planting the notion that we need drugs,
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Direct-to-consumer-advertising (DTCA) of prescription drugs is illegal in Canada under the Food and Drugs Act. Our law is similar to health protection laws in European countries, Australia and Japan. However, you'd never know it to look at Canadian TV, magazines and billboards. Since 2000, Health Canada has become extremely lax in enforcing

the law and has used a 1978 price advertising clause as a loophole to allow branded "reminder ads."

Canada's parliamentary health committee has just published a report, "Opening the Medicine Cabinet," calling for this loophole to be closed and saying a resounding no to broader proposals to introduce full USA-style drug advertising in Canada. The committee

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could find no public health rationale for allowing any kind of direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertising, including reminder ads.

Ads, by their very nature, do not mention alternatives to the product they advertise and tend to downplay any risks or side effects. This leads to unrealistic expectations of drug treatment, unnecessary prescribing and use, and higher drug costs.

The American experience with direct-to-consumer advertising is well documented. The results to date: a steep rise in spending on prescription drugs, a steep increase in the number of prescriptions for advertised drugs, and a steep increase in the use of newly-introduced drugs whose safety and side-effects are not well-known. When it comes to medicines, newer is not necessarily better and sometimes it's worse, as with a heavily-advertised diabetes drug, Rezulin (troglitazone), which reached \$2.1 billion (USA) in sales, but was also named as a suspected cause in over 500 deaths.

The Canadian government can avoid these pitfalls by enforcing laws currently in place, and by refraining from adopting new laws opening the doors to DTCA in Canada.

Women's health and consumer groups, the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Pharmacists' Association, the Canadian Nurses' Association and many others are strongly opposed to the introduction of direct-to-consumer advertising.

For more information or to help spread the word by sending this poster to others, visit the Women and Health Protection website at: www.whp-apsf.ca/en.

Women and Health Protection (WHP) is a coalition of community groups, researchers, journalists and activists concerned about the safety of pharmaceutical drugs. The group keeps a close watch over proposed changes in federal health protection legislation and examines the impact of those changes on women's health. Our documents make clear recommendations to the government with a view to ensuring that Canadian legislation truly provides "health protection." For further information, visit: www.whp-apsf.ca.

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July - September 2004

Putting Women Down

The British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health has produced a document, Manufacturing Addiction: The Over-Prescription of Tranquilizers and Sleeping Pills to Women in Canada, highlighting the extent and dangers of abuse of these drugs. The following is an excerpt.

The over-prescription of benzodiazepines (tranquilizers) to women in Canada was first identified as a critical health care issue in the 1970s. Yet in the year 2000 alone, there were more than 15.7 million prescriptions filled by Canadian retail pharmacies. When women go to their doctor with comparable symptoms, they are more likely than men to be prescribed benzodiazepines.

Physicians prescribe benzodiazepines and sleeping pills to help women cope with work or family stress, pre-menstrual syndrome, grief, and adjustment to life events, such as childbirth and menopause, or for chronic illness and pain. Non-drug treatments for these circumstances and conditions continue to be under-promoted and under-used.

Side Effects

Benzodiazepines impair cognitive functioning, memory and balance and because they are often prescribed to women for longer than the recommended time period (a maximum of two to four weeks), women are also at particular risk of involuntary addiction.

Directly or indirectly, benzodiazepines influence almost every brain function and ultimately most biological systems, including the central nervous,

neuromuscular, endocrine and gastrointestinal systems. Sleeping pills (hypnotics) act by the same mechanisms and have the same effects on the brain and body.

Benzodiazepines and sleeping pills also impair and

compromise a wide range of basic skills that are necessary for coping with the intellectual

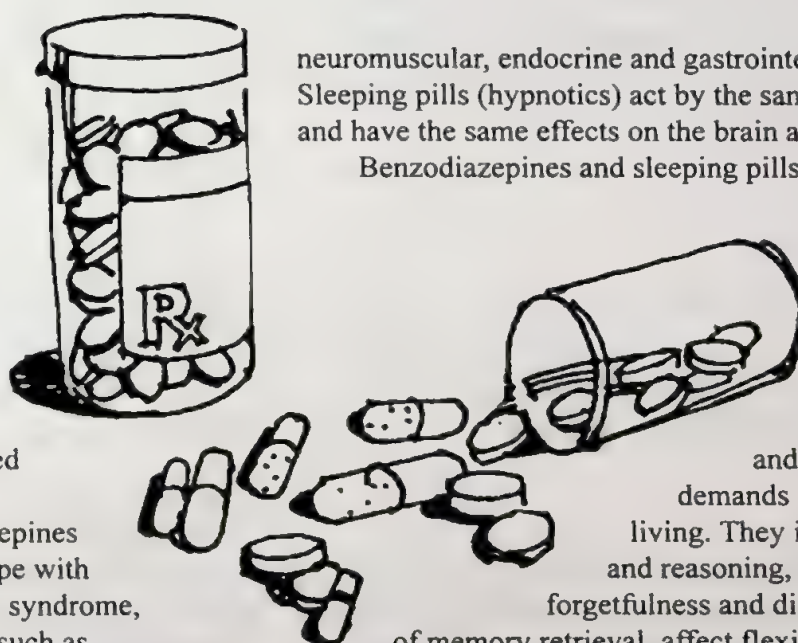
and psychological demands of everyday

living. They impair memory and reasoning, produce

forgetfulness and disrupt the process of memory retrieval, affect flexibility of thoughts and motor control, eye/hand coordination, mental reaction, information processing and focus. Balance control is affected by benzodiazepine use leading to an increased risk of falls and hip and femur fractures, especially among the elderly. Benzodiazepines are also a common cause of confusion and dementia in seniors.

Tolerance Withdrawal

A lack of understanding of the symptoms of tolerance withdrawal often results in the addition of other prescription drugs (for example, antidepressants or anti-psychotics), with increased side effects, leading to further involvement of women in the health or mental health systems.



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Aboriginal Women

One in three status Aboriginal women over 40 in Western Canada was prescribed tranquilizers or sleeping pills in 2000. Aboriginal women are almost twice as likely to receive tranquilizer prescriptions as Aboriginal men.

Senior Women

Up to 50 percent of all women over 60 in Canada may be prescribed tranquilizers or sleeping pills. Long-term care facilities, which have a higher proportion of female residents, also have high levels of benzodiazepine prescription rates. These drugs are a common cause of confusion, cognitive decline and dementia. Long-term tranquilizer use has also been linked to an increased risk of falls and hip and femur fractures among the elderly.

Pregnant Women

Tranquilizers and sleeping pills have been linked to floppy infant syndrome, failure to suckle, and withdrawal symptoms in the child. It may also impair fetal growth and retard brain development, leading to learning and emotional difficulties for the child later in life.

Poverty

According to BC's Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, benzodiazepines may be used to numb patients to the physical and mental pain of poverty and harsh reality.

Alternatives

Non-drug treatments and resources are under-promoted and under-used. Health Canada and the provincial/territorial governments should provide funding and support to community-based organizations to explore and provide free of charge non-drug advice and options that support women's well-being and help women cope.

By allowing the over-prescription and inappropriate use of benzodiazepines and sleeping pills to women in Canada, we are "manufacturing addiction" and contributing both to the suffering of women and their families and to escalating health care costs. The benefits of acting on this problem are many and clear. Action to address this problem is long overdue.

For more information, see the full study at: www.bccwh.bc.ca/policy_briefs/Benzo_Brief/benzobriefv3.pdf. Or call (604) 875-2633.

If you or someone you know is possibly addicted to sleeping pills or tranquilizers, contact: 1-888-818-9172 for more information.

Common benzodiazepines available in Canada include: Ativan (lorazepam), Serax (oxazepam), Rivotril and Klonopin (clonazepam), Xanax (alprazolam) and Valium (diazepam). Common sleeping pills available in Canada include: Ambien (zolpidem) and Imovane (zopiclone).

DTCA

In direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) of drugs on television and in magazines in the USA, it has been found that women are targeted more than twice as often as men and the volume of DTCA is highest in women's magazines. As these ads easily make their way across the border, women in Canada face additional pressure to view life events and natural processes as medical conditions for which medication is needed.

As direct-to-consumer ads have been shown to be a poor source of information about prescription drugs it is important that federal legislation in Canada be strengthened to protect women from DTCA.

Excerpt from Manufacturing Addiction: The Over-Prescription of Tranquilizers and Sleeping Pills to Women in Canada by Janet C. Currie with the British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health.

Going Green in Cuba

Another important step in the Agricultural Revolution

by Danielle Alfaro and Amy Juschka



The Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation recently hosted a well attended educational luncheon concerning the Cuban Organic Revolution. Several delegates from Cuba spoke about the history of this revolution and the successes they have had. They were in Canada as part of an exchange project where organic farmers from Canada and Cuba spend a month on each other's farms to share ideas and learn new techniques.

The Cuban organic movement, which began in 1994, has had widespread popularity among Cuban farmers. With the collapse of the Soviet block, Cuba no longer had the access to gas, oil and technology it needed to continue large scale farming. This, coupled with concerns for the environment and sustainable development, led to the organic movement.

Because about 80 percent of Cubans live in urban areas and transportation of produce, as well as workers, was an issue, the organic farming movement has mostly taken place near or within cities. With just tiny portions of land (often times about a quarter of a hectare), these farmers grow everything from medicinal herbs and vegetables to coffee and fruit. In addition, many farmers also raise a wide variety of livestock, such as chickens and goats.

The bulk of the produce is used for family and local consumption and the excess crop is sold within the country. Also, many farmers donate portions of their crop to help meet the needs of their local hospitals and daycare centers. Osvaldo Franchi-Alfaro Roque, one of the farmers who spoke at the luncheon, had made it his mission to plant cherry trees, which contain high doses of Vitamin C, in the backyards of daycare centers so the children will have a steady supply and

natural source for this important nutrient.

In addition to being incredibly productive (food production has risen from 1 million metric tons in 1994 to 14 million in 2004), this movement is also very environmentally friendly. In lieu of using pesticides, farmers choose alternative methods of pest control such as colour traps, fungi, and various repellant plants. Compost is provided by the Cuban government, which wholeheartedly supports and co-ordinates this movement, and is produced by the farmers themselves.

One of the delegates spoke about his patented irrigation system which uses no energy and has helped over 600 farmers produce two million guava tree saplings for distribution throughout the country. These methods are in stark contrast to typical Canadian chemical reliant farming, which is terribly damaging to the environment.

The Cuban delegates, who are project co-ordinators as well as farmers, have also developed innovative ways to teach other Cuban farmers, which involve music and dance in addition to videos, tours and other alternative means of education. This movement is truly an amazing thing because in addition to enhancing the environment while creating sustainable food production, the organic project also creates jobs, promotes healthy living, and the food tastes great! Saskatchewan is so fortunate to have had an opportunity to meet these trailblazers and learn from them.

Danielle Alfaro is studying psychology at the University of Regina.

Amy Juschka is studying political science and international development at Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, ON.



Skeletons Speak Truth

Guatemalans finally get some answers, after 20 years of wondering and hoping

story and photos by Camilla Morrow

On the night of May 8, 1981, Carmen Cumez and her husband Felipe Poyón sat down to talk in their kitchen on the outskirts of Comalapa in the Guatemalan highlands. “We don’t know what’s going to happen,” said Felipe, who had received a death threat 11 months earlier, “so I’ll go ahead and plant our corn tomorrow anyway.” Death threats against town leaders and catechists were common in the early 80s when Felipe’s had been nailed to their adobe house.

A catechist and farmer, Felipe had wanted to go into hiding after the threat, but Carmen had persuaded him that the family should stay together. They were both 24 at the time, with a three year-old daughter and two year-old son. Now, dipping his bread into sweetened coffee, Felipe told Carmen that all he wanted was to die without ever being tortured, and to have a proper burial.

Two hours later, with Felipe asleep and Carmen preparing corn for the morning’s tortillas, she heard loud voices calling out his name interspersed with vulgarities, then saying they just wanted to ask him a question. After kicking down the door, one masked soldier entered

holding a switchblade, rope and pistol. Felipe cried out, saying he was having a nightmare. As the soldier dragged him off, Carmen pleaded, “Leave his body here, so I can bury him.”

“We’re not going to kill him,” said the soldier, “just ask him a question.”

That was the last time Carmen Cumez, five and a half months pregnant at the time, ever saw her husband, dead or alive. As he disappeared into the night, Carmen heard him cry out, “Adios forever, Carmen, take care of our children!” For the next 15 days, she looked for his body in ravines and morgues, on hillsides and in rivers. Six weeks later, a priest who knew a local lieutenant told her that Felipe’s body was in a mass grave at the military barracks south of town, where the army had killed him.

Felipe’s and Carmen’s fate are far from unusual in Guatemala, especially among the Mayan population, who comprise 83.3 percent of the victims in what is referred to as “the time of violence,” the early 1980s, when the army targeted community leaders, teachers, catechists, union members, *campesino* (farm) groups, students as well as

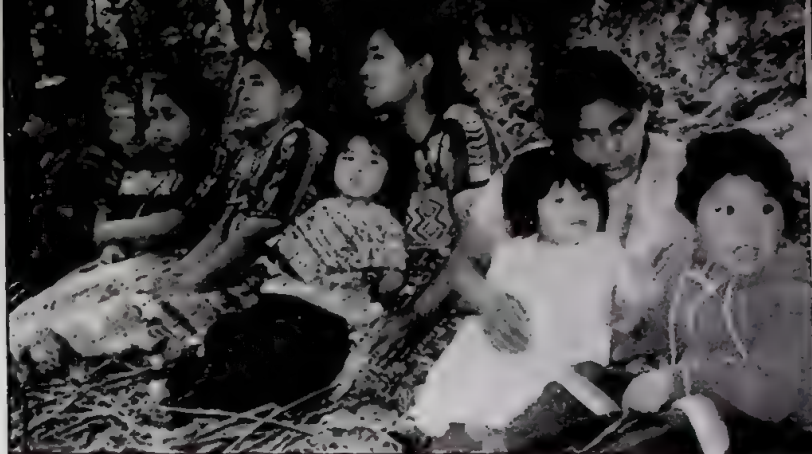
anyone they suspected of aiding the opposition - which had taken up arms in its quest for justice, land reform, and a fairer distribution of the country's resources - accusing them all of being subversives and communists.

It is estimated that 200,000 people were killed between 1960 and 1996, when the United Nations-brokered Peace Accords were signed. Eighty-five percent of the abuses happened between 1981 and 1983. According to Rosalina Tuyuc, Guatemala's first indigenous congresswoman, as well as the founder and Director of CONAVIGUA, the National Widows' Association, "the army thought we would forget the massacres, but we haven't. Our husbands died thinking of us and our children, and their blood and screams are still here in this land. As long as we have life, we will continue to search for them. We won't consider them dead until we give them a proper burial."

Now, 23 years later, Carmen Cumez is the only woman on Comalapa's town council, and is the local representative of CONAVIGUA, a driving force behind Guatemala's efforts at bringing about justice and reconciliation by conducting exhumations of hundreds of clandestine mass graves spread throughout the country. These exhumations are the most extensive ones currently being undertaken in the world.

At the Comalapa site, Mayans who had lost loved ones dug the earth for six days before they found the first grave with a skeleton in it. "We received a tip from someone who knew, saying that about 40 varas (32 metres) from the anona tree towards the pine, we would find a grave," explained Alvaro Jacobo, an archaeologist who works for the Forensic Anthropological Foundation of Guatemala (FAFG), a non-governmental organization formed in 1997 to deal fairly with the genocide and disappearances by conducting exhumations around the country. Like other NGOs working on the Exhumation Process, FAFG receives all its funding from foreign sources, including the Canadian, Dutch and British embassies, as well as U.S. Aid. "So far, we have found five skeletons in this pit," he added, carefully brushing the dirt from a left femur.

Carmen Cumez and a dozen other Mayans held vigil throughout the week that FAFG worked the site, doing group prayers for their disappeared family members, as well as for the archaeologists, and feeding everyone a lunch of squash soup and thick corn tortillas. A few metres from the open pit, they constructed a small altar



Women who lost family members in the "Time of Violence," sitting in the forest at the Comalapa site

with a statue of Mother Mary under a cross of white flowers, and in a clump of trees beyond, two policemen kept watch around the clock in eight-hour shifts to ensure the graves were left intact.

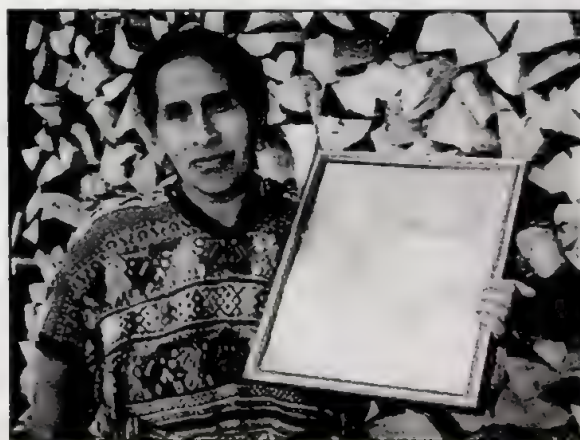
Rosalina Tuyuc joined them for three days, helping to clear the land with a machete in order to make the digging possible. "Most people prefer to keep quiet, for fear of endangering their children's lives, but we know that in Comalapa area alone, more than 250 people were disappeared," she explains, "so we can only hope that the

Peace Process will prevent something similar from happening again."

FAFG estimates that upwards of 1300 clandestine cemeteries are spread throughout the country, and calculates it will take 15 years to complete the exhumations. "The next ten years are crucial, due to the problem of memory," explains Alan Robinson, FAFG's Director of Forensic Anthropologists, in an interview in his busy office which employs 60 people. "The families are getting older, so we

feel a certain pressure to keep up the momentum and work as quickly as we can." In addition, FAFG has to deal with the pressure of periodic death threats, either by phone or in anonymous letters containing a list of names, and some of its staff now use the protection of security guards, well aware that those responsible for the atrocities of the 1980s do not want FAFG's work to come to fruition.

CONAVIGUA, with over 3000 members, does the preparation work to initiate the exhumations. Seated in the pine forest, a few metres from the open pit, Carmen Cumez, dressed in a traditional Mayan *huipil* that she wove, explains in a soft voice, "The process is very complex, as we must first get permission from the current



Carmen Cumez with photo of her disappeared husband



Alvaro Jacobo, archaeologist with FAFG, exhuming skeletons at Comalapa site

land owner in order to begin digging, which is not always easy. For example, the former military barracks where I was told my husband is buried is owned by a man whose son is in the military; he told us we could only dig there if we pay 5,000 quetzales (\$625 USA). Then the Public Ministry and the local Justice of the Peace must both authorize it as well. Sometimes the latter says no, or postpones it indefinitely."

When CONAVIGUA does manage to gain the assent of all three, they consult with locals to know where the bodies are buried. "Many people are afraid to speak up," says Cumez, "so it is not an easy task; we often hear second or

third-hand information." Then they ask FAFG, or one of Guatemala's other two forensic NGO's, to begin excavating a site. With that completed, the labelled skeletons are analyzed by forensic anthropologists in FAFG's laboratory in the capital (2,400 skeletons to date, most in the last four years) and the resulting report and bones are given to the Public Ministry, which then co-ordinates with the affected communities to have the skeletons identified and reclaimed by family members. The identification process is simplified if the deceased had a fractured limb, unusual teeth, or any other distinguishing feature, or if part of their clothing remained recognizable.

In Rabinal, north of the capital, 4,411 people (20 percent of the population) were killed by military or para-military troops between 1980 and 1983. Exhumations were completed in early 2004, and all but one body was claimed by its relatives. Even the one that no-one recognized was taken home by a man who hadn't found his missing son, in order to give it a proper burial. Virtually all of those killed were Mayan, who

represent 82 percent of the local population.

Rabinal boasts the only museum of its kind in Guatemala, with an entire room devoted to black and white photographs with a brief biography of dozens of people killed in village massacres, or disappeared individually. Founded by Carlos Chen Osorio, a survivor whose wife and children were killed in the Rio Negro Massacre nearby, the museum also has several documentaries on video, including one showing Efraín Ríos Montt, President of Guatemala in the early 1980s when most army massacres took place, campaigning in Rabinal prior to federal elections last November, and the resulting heckling and stone-throwing of an enraged crowd who remember all too well, two decades later, the brutal consequences of his regime.

In the Rabinal cemetery, memorials for the massacred have been constructed, including one with portraits of three men each currently serving 50 years in prison for torture and genocide committed in the early 1980s; to date they are the only ones to be convicted of such crimes. However, the Centre for Legal Action in Human

Rights (CALDH), an NGO, is at the forefront of 20 organizations whose aim is to bring Ríos Montt and his collaborators to trial, a labourious and challenging task,

given Guatemala's history of corruption, impunity and injustice.

At the same time, another NGO, the Team of Community Studies and Psychosocial Action (ECAP), sends trained psychologists to several affected communities to help survivors deal with the traumas they have experienced. ECAP strongly supports the Exhumations Process, maintaining that a proper and dignified burial will

Even the skeleton that no-one recognized was taken home by a man who hadn't found his missing son, in order to give it a proper burial.

establish the truth, while proclaiming the innocence of the victims, the brutality of their death, and the truth of the family's suffering. "After the massacres of the early 1980s, we widows organized CONAVIGUA to assess our situation, and support each other," says Rosalina Tuyuc. "Many of the widows developed heart problems, bad nerves, insomnia, and weak eyesight. The war caused an enormous loss of our Mayan culture, and is partly responsible for so many of our young people joining the *maras* (gangs), as they feel lost."

Carmen Cumez knows about the aftermath of trauma; for 20 years, she had bad pains, headaches, and at times paralysis of her arms and hands. She had to put her son in an orphanage, while her daughters lived with her sister for several years. Even now, she still suffers from bad nerves and headaches, especially when she wakes from a dream about Felipe, and realizes she's alone. He often comes to her in dreams, saying things like, "Don't worry Carmen, I'm going to bring you some firewood."

And last week, when the first five contorted skeletons were found at the Comalapa site, their wrists and ankles bound by wire, she didn't sleep a wink that night, remembering Felipe's words, "All I want is to die without being tortured, and to have a proper burial."



Forensic anthropologists at FAFG lab in Guatemala City identify skeletons of the disappeared

More than two decades later, Carmen Cumez has not given up hope of fulfilling his second wish.

Camilla Morrow teaches English and Spanish in Victoria, BC and freelances as an interpreter. She has worked in human rights and development work in several Latin America countries, and was in Guatemala in the early 1980s. She returned in 2004 for the exhumations.

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Book Review

An Action A Day:

Keeps Global Capitalism Away

by Mike Hudema

Between the Lines, Toronto, ON, 2004.

www.btlbooks.com

reviewed by Randy Kay

Social change requires feeling uncomfortable. Of course those with vested interests in maintaining the status quo are going to squirm when their product or service is exposed as dangerous or unhealthy to the public good, but it's also uncomfortable for those who want to make the change.

Being an "activist" is a role that should take you beyond your comfort zone on occasion; beyond your living room and away from your computer screen. The streets beckon, but what are you going to do when you get there? This is where Hudema's book comes in handy.

Hudema has taken-up the sport of "The Action," that momentous occasion where high ideals descend to the earth to take physical form. This could involve leading a Radical Cheerleading group through their pom-pom paces, or dressing as a tree. It could be as simple as a candlelight vigil or as complicated as a massive street party. *An Action a Day* describes 52 actions, each rated on a scale measuring fun, risk and resources. Hudema's work will make a nice Canadian content companion to Gene Sharp's classic *198 Methods of Nonviolent Action*, or Abby Hoffman's *Steal This Book*.

What Hudema offers people interested in changing the world is a creative assortment of clever counter-attacks to the dominant ideology, infused with the too often neglected element of fun. Social change enthusiasts often get caught up in thinking that their specialty area is the thing that's going to make it all happen. Petitions, rational appeals to ruling elites, letter writing, election campaigns, looking for a "saviour" in the form of a large NGO or famous person, a well-crafted letter to the editor - all contribute something, but many groups are turning to the creative, public protest side of things.

An important caveat might be "beware of groups who enjoy frequent and lengthy meetings but rarely take action." To get results, you've got to stir things up, and the more moving parts the better. Grab a piece of

sidewalk chalk, hook up with the local Critical Mass cyclists, start a chapter of the Edible Ballot Society or open a Free Store - all of these activities are described in Hudema's book, complete with a "Why" do this action and "What You Need" list.

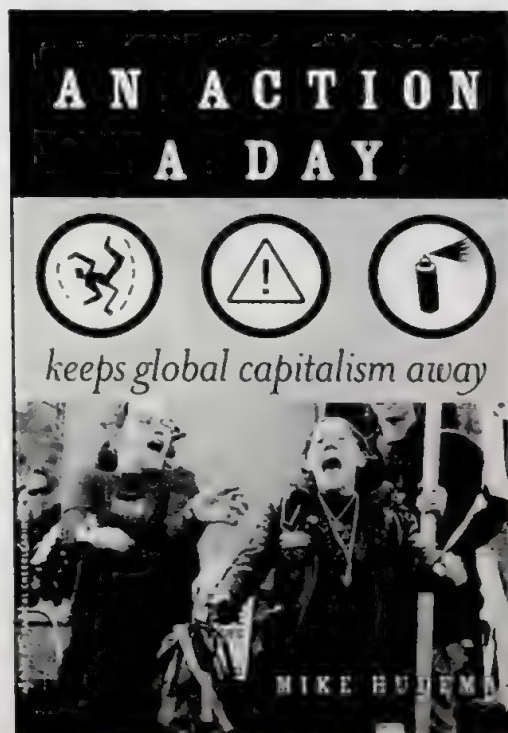
There are bound to be weak spots when trying to cover a vast range of actions; for instance, the assessment of the penalty for engaging in blockades, where a charge could very well escalate from trespass to the much more serious criminal charge of mischief - something to be aware of.

An important lesson found in this book is that you don't need vast financial resources, that you *can* dance while the revolution unfolds, that boring chants are not required and that there are others out there who actually enjoy dressing up as a tree. In short, the movement needs YOU!


For those who must have theory wrapped in the protective cloak of science, Chaos Theory teaches us that change is not always linear, following expected patterns. Social change is chaotic in the sense that we can't always point to a clear cause and

effect relationship; *An Action a Day* is pleasantly full of non-linear chaotic interventions that contribute to enlivening the potential for change.

Randy Kay works part-time for the Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) at McMaster University, and has initiated several creative protests including building Community Gardens in Red Hill Valley, Bowling for Community Dollars, Parking Meter Parties and Critical Mass events.



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**A Human Being
Died That Night:
A South African woman
confronts
the legacy of apartheid.
by Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela.
Mariner Books/ Houghton
Mifflin, USA, 2004.**

reviewed by Theresa Wolfwood

The legacy of apartheid horror and violence is a heavy burden for many South Africans. Those who still mourn the loss of children, parents, siblings and beloved friends found some relief in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), an important and unique process that allowed perpetrators of violence and cruelty to atone to their victims and victims' families. The TRC allowed those victims still alive, and their families to confront the torturers, to stand fearlessly before them and to choose to forgive or not to forgive those who expressed remorse. Many felt healed, others justified. Some criminals went free to live with their sins, while others went to jail - some for life as the death penalty has been abolished in South Africa.

When clinical psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, a member of the TRC, went to a prison to interview one of the murderers in the dreaded secret police, she faced a man who had committed unspeakable deeds in his country. But she also faced the universal questions of the nature of evil and human violence, and the possibility of transformation and the human capacity for forgiveness.

The story of this psychologist and the subject of her study, death squad chief Eugene de Kock, along with the story of racial division resulting in years of searing violence, leads ultimately to the universal search for meaning in human life. Gobodo-Madikizela was drawn to meet and try to understand de Kock after his appearance before the TRC. He had apologized for his crimes and asked to meet the widows of four men whose deaths he had ordered. Two of the widows did meet him, were moved by his atonement and chose to forgive him. The author says that their response was what led to her examination, in *A Human Being Died That Night*, of the questions surrounding remorse and forgiveness. For some, she writes, the questions may be irrelevant. But South Africans must attempt to live in peace with their former enemies; their lives are intertwined and many may even be their neighbours.

Book Reviews



She confronts evil personified with an open heart, but with clear memories and often with fear and horror when de Kock describes "details of his violent past with a vividness that was frightening." To confront, to recognize, and to know evil in the heart of another person is in turn to acknowledge its presence in the heart of every person, including oneself. It follows that one must accept the possibility of good in every heart. This leads to the understanding that remorse, forgiveness, and transformation are the possible lights at the end of the dark tunnel. The author examines every aspect of and reason for the acts of atonement and the acts of forgiveness in a relentless and clear questioning of all events and behaviour - including her own.

The author compares the apartheid crimes with those of the Nazis. She quotes Peter Malkin who captured the famous war criminal, Adolf Eichmann.

He reported that his prisoner was unrepentant when admitting his crimes - just doing a job. But Malkin is moved to reflect on his own behaviour and realizes that he has committed unjust and criminal acts while followed orders - for what seemed like noble reasons. The universality of the ability to rationalize on the basis of patriotism, the greater good, and lofty ideals is terrifyingly portrayed in *A Human Being Died That Night*, which is one reason why I found this book so disturbing. It made me reflect and wonder about my own rationalizations - and my own capacity for evil and good.

In order to forgive and to feel compassion for a perpetrator of evil and violence after an event involving rape, torture or murder, one must have a sense of power and hope. One must be in a secure position where the perpetrator can no longer commit deeds of horror. Ultimately that depends on a victory (violent or non-violent) over the system that produced the evil-doers. South Africans won that victory with blood and, as the author admits, some awful cruelty of their own, so the process of reconciliation is vital to break the cycle of violence. Gobodo-Madikizela believes that societal groups can transcend cycles of violence through forgiveness, and that the result of this painful process will be "a more authentic and lasting sense of self-esteem and of collective worth" for the scarred and victimized citizens of a new South Africa.

Theresa Wolfwood works for the Barnard-Boecker Centre Foundation, Victoria, BC. Her reviews of other significant books can be found on the website at: www.islandnet.com/~bbcf.

Dubya

Speak...

"I want you to know that farmers are not going to be secondary thoughts to a Bush administration. They will be in the forethought of our thinking."

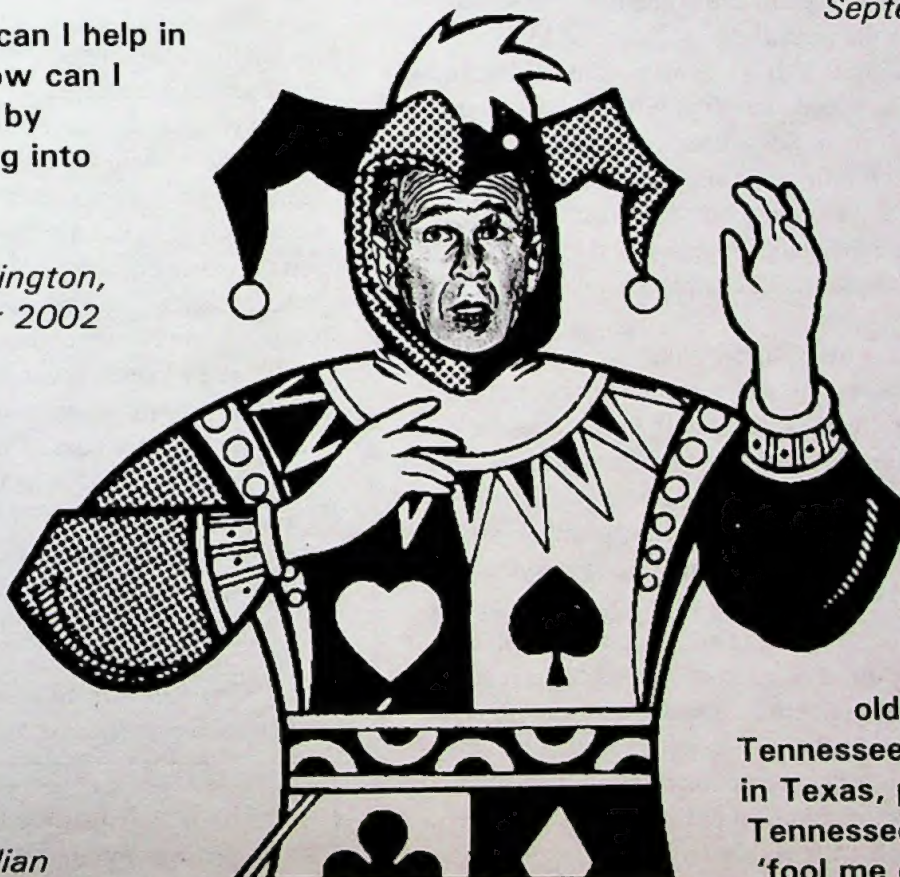
- Salinas, California, August 2000

"People say, 'How can I help in the war against terror? How can I fight evil?' You can do so by mentoring a child, by going into a shut-in's house and say 'I love you.'"

- a speech given in Washington, DC, September 2002

"We need an energy bill that encourages consumption."

- a speech given in Trenton, New Jersey, September 2002



"Do you have blacks, too?"

- question put to Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso during a meeting at the White House, November 8, 2001

"There's an old saying in Tennessee - I know it's in Texas, probably in Tennessee - that says 'fool me once, shame on - shame on you. You fool me - can't get fooled again.'"

- Nashville, Tennessee, September 2002

"They hide in caves. See, this is a different kind of war. And part of my responsibilities as your president is to remind people of the realities that we face in America. One of the realities is, is that these people hide in caves."

- South Bend, Indiana, September 2002

Chemical Soup

by Debra Brin

Mosquito season is here. The little buggers are as annoying as hell, and to many people that's a good enough incentive to throw caution aside and don repellants. But be careful that you don't trade one misery for a bigger one.

Our skin evolved to protect us from drying out, and to keep out bacteria and other natural elements. It works wonderfully for that, but it is ineffective when it comes to protecting us from the unnatural chemicals that are responsible for the increasing incidence of Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), as well as the better known illnesses such as cancer, sterility, birth and developmental problems, attention deficit concerns, nervous system disruption and chronic respiratory ailments. Up to 35 percent of North Americans currently react to various chemicals with a myriad of symptoms; people with MCS are canaries in the looming chemical mine disaster - heed the warning.

We now have over 70,000 synthetic chemicals that have been introduced into our environment since the beginning of the chemical revolution kick-started in World War I. Attempts by governments have managed to sort out *some* of the very obvious highly toxic ones. These are used deliberately as weapons against insects, plants, animals and people. The most deadly ones usually have a warning label. Those with less obvious or delayed impact are being used freely, and without warning, in all aspects of our lives.

Once in a while, a direct connection can be made, linking a chemical to a serious health issue, and it gets pulled from that particular use or it gets a warning label - like cigarettes. But when we are marinating in so many chemicals and combinations of chemical, it is extremely difficult to determine the guiltiest ones.

This past May, 80 medical experts (including two Nobel Prize winners for medicine) from Europe, Canada and the USA released the International Declaration on Diseases Due to Chemical Pollution, warning about what they call "a serious threat to children, and human survival." Regulations, already weak, are currently becoming meaningless with the signing of trade deals like NAFTA that are prohibiting the banning of toxins unless complete proof and full scientific agreement can be established.

As for the mosquitos and the current threat of West Nile Virus, lawn care companies and their big daddies, the pesticide makers, are fighting back because our cities and towns are passing by-laws that prohibit the use of toxic chemicals. More and more Canadians are making natural choices and allowing nature's balance to re-establish itself.

But the chemical companies have the big bucks needed to ensure that the media turns a few deaths (14 in 2003) into a plague that scares many into hosing themselves, their kids and their property down with toxins, and insisting that their city spray poison over the whole community. To put this into perspective, nearly 2000 people die each year from the flu, but the flu doesn't have a profit factor - a mosquito to declare chemical war on.

Or how about the countless deaths from all the different cancers from the chemicals in our air, water, vegetables, meat, beer, toiletries and cleaners? No big whoop in the news because the chemical industry is also the pharmaceutical industry, so they make money twice. And we just hand it over - first when we are told that our house should smell like an ocean breeze, and then again when we are sick - without looking for the cause because we are only told to look for the cure. The corporate news and the commercials go hand in hand to program our compliance.

But it's not too late to reclaim our health and our environment. Resources are available to help us make safer (and often cheaper) choices about the products we use.

Wishing you a nice poison-free day...

Debra Brin has MCS and reacts way worse to pesticides and repellants than to mosquito bites.



The Guide to Less Toxic Products

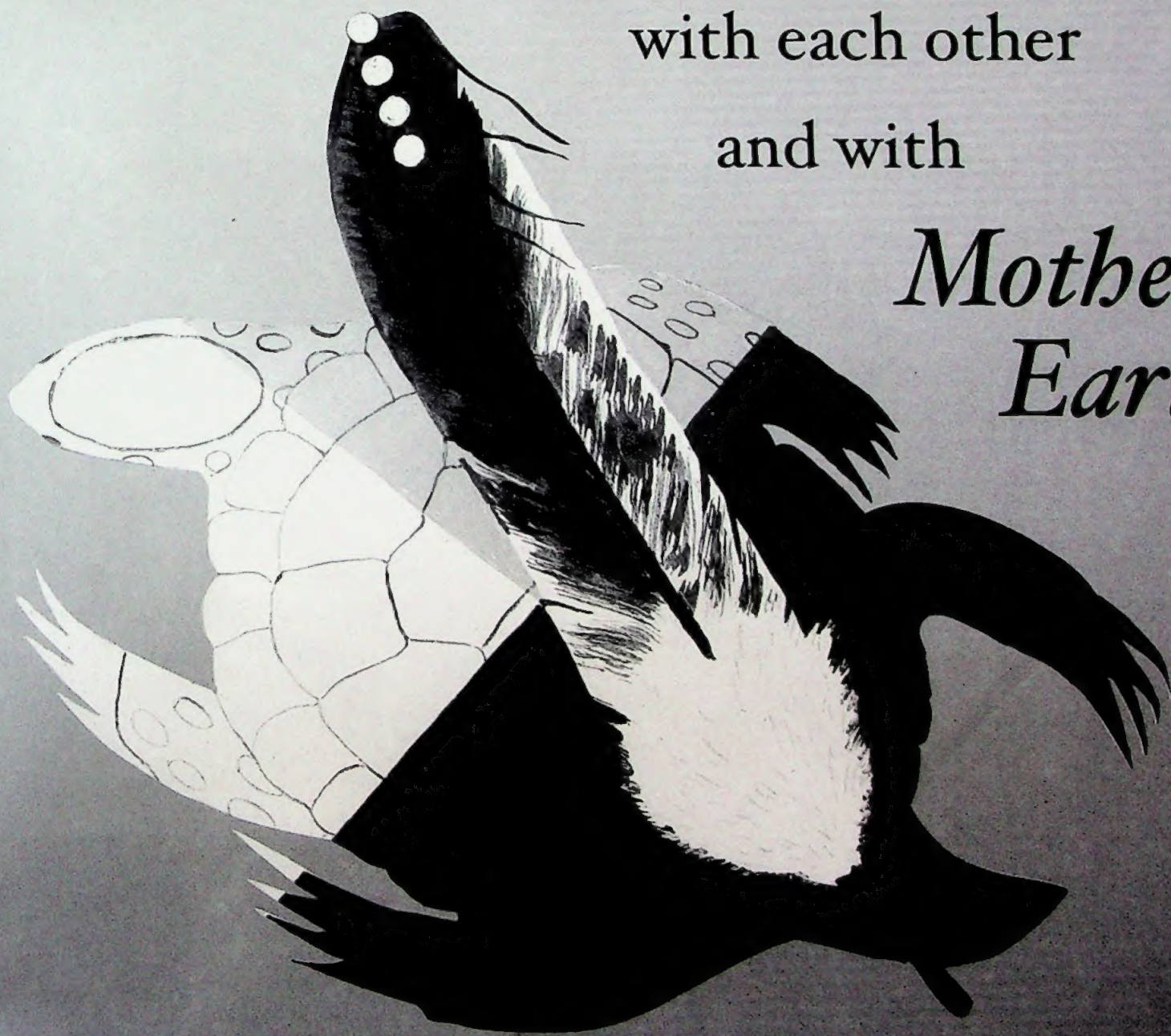
"Our aim was to address the needs of a wide range of people - from those who must avoid fragrances or other chemicals, to people who want to provide a healthy environment for their children, decrease their exposure to carcinogens and reproductive toxins, or be more environmentally responsible consumers," says project coordinator Barb Harris at the Nova Scotia Allergy and Environmental Health Association. "The Guide is a tool for prevention, as well as a way of helping people cope with existing allergies and sensitivities."

Scientist and environmental advocate David Suzuki says of the Guide, "For all of us who know that we are exposed to toxic chemicals every minute of our lives but feel helpless to do much about it, here is an opportunity to take some responsibility."

www.less toxicguide.ca

We embrace *diversity*
as part of our way
of ensuring *harmony*
with each other
and with

*Mother
Earth.*

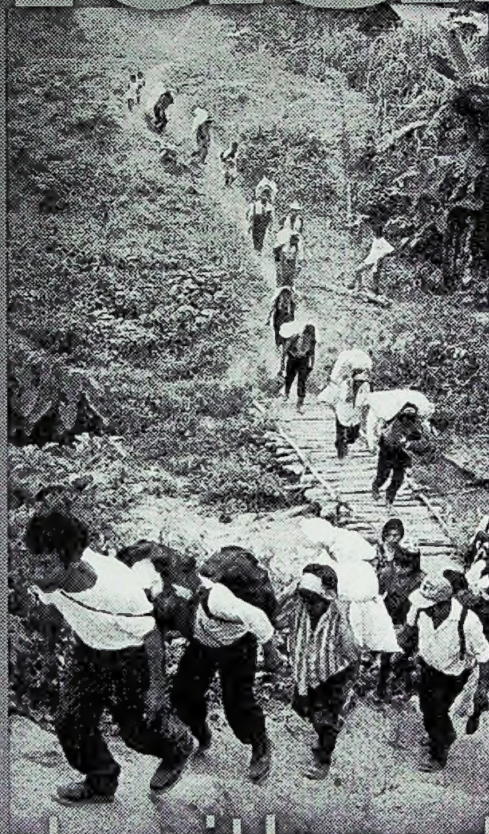


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